771 power to determine the customs of the people.

G. Superstitions and Taboo

• 784 In spite of the enormous strides made by education in the past three decades, many superstitions and prejudices persist among the Formosan people. They often take the form of taboo or premonitions.

Some uneducated Formosans believe that if a person stumbles on the threshhold of his home just before commencing a journey, danger awaits him en route. To choke while eating presages bad luck. An itching ear is a sign that others are talking about us. The crowing of a rooster at night is a bad omen. Illness and misfortune are punishments sent by angry gods who demand propitiation. An earthquake is caused by the restlessness of a sleeping bull. The dead, especially those who have drowned, are objects of fear. People who waste rice may be struck by lightning.

The aborigines have their own super-
[826] stitions and taboos. Twins and crippled babies are misfortunes to a family and are allowed to die at birth. Intermarriage among members of the same clan is forbidden. Only members of the immediate family may touch

784 the dead. No person may eat the food raised by a clan to which he does not belong.

These are taboo, superstitions, and prejudice, and yet all have a symbolic reference to reality; some tend to protect the group against the wilfulness of the individual; others can be explained in psychosomatic terms; still others are poetic interpretations of natural phenomena.

828 Belief in the value of the interpretation of dreams is another aspect of the folk-culture of the Formosan people. Those who dream of wearing a yellow robe or of sighting fish swimming in a well may expect to receive money.[8] Those who dream of drinking on a high terrace may expect to be offered a position in government. To dream of murder or suicide is interpreted as a good omen. To dream of ants in bed or of a clouded mirror are evil omens. All of these have their Western equivalents, the patently absurd in dream books, the poetically accurate in the literature of psychoanalysis.

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8. This superstition led many families to attempt to breed fish in the family well.